



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKays

Baby's Record

A "Mother's Book" before me lies,
And as I read its pages fair,
I seem to see a baby's face
Beside its lock of shining hair.
It was in June the baby came;
'Mid sunny skies its life began;
In June the baby went away—
Oh, little feet that never ran!

The date of birth, the baby's weight—
A tiny mite, yet, oh, how dear!
A lock of hair, the first dress worn,
The baby's name, are written here.
"Baby's first gifts"—a rubber ring,
A rattle-box, a worsted ball,
A tiny golden chain, a ring,
A picture book, a rubber doll.

"Baby's first laugh"—the record ends.
Oh, little life, so sweet and dear!
Oh, little feet that never ran
In the short time it lingered here!

It was in June the baby came—
In June the baby went away;
A memory sweet is left with these
Sweet records of the baby's stay.

—E. A. McGregor.

Our Social Chat

Quite a few of our sisters have written me, in answer to my call a few weeks ago, but I want to hear from more of you. Many of our readers say: "I have often thought I would write to you, but know you are always so busy." But you know it is the busiest person who always has the most leisure. One who has much to do never allows her work to crowd her. She knows she must always allow for interruptions, pleasant or otherwise; so, when the "unexpected happens," she has time to meet the demands.

Now, I am going to ask you again to let me hear from you. I know what a task it is for many people to write a letter, and how often the pen or pencil is mislaid, the ink well dry or the supply of stationery exhausted; so I am not going to ask you to send me a letter—though I am always pleased to get one or many. The Commoner family is a large one, and the number of "girls" belonging to it is well up to the hundred thousand mark—did you realize that there were so many? But that is only the "women-folks"—the voters are two or three to our one. Out of that hundred thousand, surely one thousand can find time and inclination to send me a few lines, or a postal card! Don't you think so? Won't you try to be one of the thousand?

Just a postal card, saying that you are interested in the Home Department; what features of it please you most, and why, what you do not like, and why, and what you think could be done to make it still more helpful and necessary to the thousands of homes into which it goes. You must send your letters—or postals—to me, care of The Commoner office, for the publishers wish to know, as well as myself, if I am doing my duty by you. I know just what I should like to give you; but my ideals are so much higher than my abilities, that I must be satisfied to do the very best I can, and there is no way of knowing whether I do this, or not, unless you tell us. May we have the postals?

Remember, I am never too busy to read what you write—and to thank you for the pleasure.

"Line Upon Line"

I can not remind you too often or too persistently that the crawling baby should have warm quarters. The coldest air in the room is at the bottom; the wee darling is "low down" in this cold strata, and must be well cared for. For the busy mother, a "baby pen" is a good and inexpensive thing. I saw one recently made of common poultry wire, two feet wide. The wire was stretched tightly around three sides of a frame, the fourth side being "boxed up" with thin boards. In this pen, baby was kept near the fire, could see everything going on around it, and the boxed side shut off any draft from the door. Such a pen would keep the little toddler in bounds, too, and the mother's unimpeded steps could thus accomplish more. Under the little ones a thick comfort or blanket could be kept, and on this the playthings might be placed—a few at a time, to be removed and replaced by others when baby showed signs of tiring of them. If the child is accustomed (as it should be) from the very first to amuse itself, it will greatly simplify the work of the mother, and the little, unwilling sister or brother—themselves little more than babies—will not be forced to "tend" or still more irksome and unsanitary, "nurse" the baby while mother is busy. Little children, like little kittens, should be handled as little as possible, and especially by the small children of the family. With the warmth and comfort about it, the little sprawler can soon be taught to amuse itself, and any one who has watched a baby at play will recall how intensely interested the little one will be in getting acquainted with its own fingers and toes. Try the "baby pen," dear mothers, and teach the baby to amuse itself.

One thing I must beg you not to do. Do not put a kitten or a puppy into this pen for baby to play with, for the sake of both baby and other youngling—especially for the baby's sake, as there may be fleas, if not disease, and there are better playthings for your darling baby. Keep the baby warm and comfortable, and don't let its little limbs become mottled with cold.

The Back Yard in Winter

As the cold weather approaches, one is apt to begin a neglect of the back yard which, by the time spring opens, has culminated into actual abuse. It is a habit with some families to throw all waste water, and much of the garbage from the house into the back yard, and during the warm months, aside from affording a breeding place for flies and malaria, it does not seem so glaringly untidy, as the water sinks into the ground, drains off or dries up under the hot sunshine, and the garbage withers with the heat or is taken care of by the natural scavengers of the soil. But with the cold weather, Nature leaves things a little to themselves. The sun does not dry up the liquids, and the little scavengers have gone out of business for the time, leaving the garbage in all its unsightliness to lie for days just where it is thrown. Unless the pigs, poultry and young stock are allowed in the yard to clean it up, the mass accumulates, and by the spring time

the whole back premises presents an appearance anything but inviting. Now is this your back yard?

A feature slightly less discouraging is the slop, or swill barrel, can or bucket, into which the water and garbage is thrown, often slopping over and always unsightly looking. Too often this is left for "mother" to empty, or at least to be incessantly calling attention to it in order to have it attended to. This certainly is not "woman's work."

If one can not have a drain-pipe or trough, there should be some other way by which the waste water may be emptied away from the house, for if thrown out in cold weather and allowed to freeze about the door, there is danger of bruised or broken limbs from slipping on the ice thus formed. Stock—even swine—should not be forced to quench their thirst with dirty water, but if it must be fed to them, let it be thickened with food. A can or box should hold all peelings, parings, and scraps from the table or cellar, and this should be given fresh and unfrozen to the stock. The receptacle should be on wheels—home-made is as good as any, so as to be easily taken to the feed pens. The back yard should be kept as neatly as is the front one, winter or summer, and it can be.

Look After the Flues

The season for lighting fires in furnace and heating stoves has arrived, and it is well to see that the flues are in good condition. Most of the fires which occur in the early winter are caused by defective flues, and could be prevented if care is taken to have the chimneys and flues put in thorough repair. Often the fires of the past season have so dried the mortar between the bricks that pieces of it drop out, leaving openings which admit fire to the walls. See that soot, scraps of mortar, loose brick, or foreign rubbish have not found lodgement in the flues, and if it has, remove it and patch up the chimney.

See that all cracks and breaks about the heating stoves are repaired, so that no live coals can drop out and cause mischief. Do not set the stove too close to a board wall, and be sure there is a good protection to the floor underneath the stove. It pays to take precautions.

Do not leave the window or door screens in place after the need for them is done. Take them down, rub them with a cloth wet in coal oil, and put them away where nothing can punch holes through them, and where they will keep dry. Flies are seldom troublesome after the first hard frost, and the screens can usually be removed during the month of October.

Give all the winter clothing a good sunning, and get your blankets on the line early, leaving them in the fresh air all day. Look over the clothing that has been stored, and mend all rips, tears and worn places, sewing on buttons, putting in new tapes, and have them ready to put on at a moment's notice. There may be many beautiful, warm days yet, before settled cold weather, but the heat will not be oppressive. Many coughs and colds can be avoided by being ready for any emergency. Especially should the children's warm clothing be ready

for immediate wear, in case of a sudden cold snap.

For the Sewing Room

When one has been worried enough, trying to get used to the misfits which ready-made clothing so often proves to be, she will determine to try making her own. If she is at all inclined to make the most of herself, this will be a good thing to do. Then, too, there are often garments which, with a little remodeling, will be as good as new, and this she can do, if she tries. The first requisite is a really good pattern, stylish, yet simple and correctly cut and marked. There are so many of these paper patterns now turned out by responsible firms, that it should not be a difficult thing to do. If the goods are new, one can suit the taste as to style and shape, but if a garment is to be remodeled, the shape and size of the ripped-apart pieces must be the determining factor.

In using a pattern, the directions printed on its individual envelope are to be rigidly followed—all the notches cut, the large and small perforations and crosses carefully marked, and the outlines of the edges, as well as the "run" of the cloth, strictly attended to. Remember that the cloth must fit the pattern; if it don't, a little piecing in inconspicuous places should be resorted to, if the material is scant. Do not allow yourself to fall into the mistake that it "will do," so it is close to the shape of the pattern. The pattern should be tried on the material in various ways before the cutting is done, and the line of perforations showing whether the goods are to be cut lengthwise or on a crosswise fold, or bias, and, if figured or with a design, these must all be cut to go the same way, either up or down, or crosswise; the nap of the cloth, too, must be considered, and care must be taken not to cut both pieces for one side—which even good seamstresses sometimes do. Many of our best periodicals not only furnish excellent paper patterns, but also booklets giving detailed directions for home dressmaking, at small cost.

In making one's own clothing, an individuality can be given each garment, and colors and trimmings, as well as styles which are becoming, may be used.

For the Toilet

To darken red hair, rub castor oil well into the scalp every two weeks. To darken faded hair, boil two ounces of garden sage in a quart of water until the water is quite dark. Strain, and wet the scalp and hair in this every night.

To remove superfluous hair, get a five-cent piece of toilet pumice stone, of fine quality. Wash the face with a good toilet soap, making it quite soapy and apply the pumice stone, rubbing gently wherever needed. It should be used every day, always on a soapy skin, literally rubbing the hair off.

A good pomade for chapped hands is made of cocoa butter and oil of sweet almonds, one ounce each; oxide of zinc and borax, one drachm each. Heat the oil and butter together in a double boiler, beat until thoroughly blended, then add the zinc and borax, beating well together, and when cool, stir into the mixture, six drops of bergamont.

A mild soap cream to be used instead of soap for washing the face before retiring, is made of fifty grams of strained honey, forty grams of pure white castile soap, powdered, and thirty grams of white wax; melt together in a double boiler; add ten

AN OLD AND WELL TRIED REMEDY
MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP for children teething should always be used for children while teething. It softens the gums, allays all pain, cures wind colic and is the best remedy for diarrhoea. Twenty-five cents a bottle.